

July 23 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Escape of Pablo Escobar

July 23, 1992

Pablo Escobar escaped from prison when Colombian authorities attempted to move him to a more secure facility. This is unfortunate at a time when President Gaviria was trying to control the prison and put an end to Escobar's criminal activities. Escobar and his ilk represent a threat to law-abiding, civilized societies throughout the hemisphere, and they must be brought to justice.

This incident underlines the difficulties

legitimate governments have in halting drug trafficking and placing drug traffickers before the bar of justice. We have strongly supported President Gaviria and the people of Colombia in their valiant fight against these violent international criminal organizations. We will continue that support and cooperation, especially to strengthen the Colombian judicial system.

Remarks to the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia in Arlington, Virginia

July 24, 1992

The President. Thank you all. Well, Sue, thank you very much. And Ann, glad to be back with you and this organization. To the members of the board, my respects; to the family, friends.

Let me first start off by saluting two former NSC hands, Bud McFarland and Dick Childress over here who have worked very hard on all of this, and also the chairman emeritus, George Brooks.

Let me begin by thanking you for the opportunity to speak again to what has got to be one of the bravest and most dedicated groups of Americans in this country.

We live in a marvelous time, a time of tremendous opportunity. We've seen the end of the cold war and the collapse of imperial communism and a new birth of freedom from Moscow to Managua. America's courage, America's vision, America's values have indeed changed the world. And yes, the cold war may be over, but the noble cause that took your fathers, your sons, and your husbands away from home is with us still. Our work must not end and will not end until you have answers about your loved ones.

Over the past 20 years, the National League of Families has seen the issue of

your missing swept up in international or domestic politics, manipulated by foreign governments, exploited by con men, sensationalized by the media. All that time, you never lost sight of what you were looking for: good faith, an honest effort to resolve your uncertainty, to find answers to the agonizing question that you live with every day.

Sometimes you may have wondered whether your Government had forgotten you. When President Reagan and I took office in '81, we made your ordeal our top priority. We knew that with all the uncertainties you live with, the one thing you should be sure of is that your Government really cares.

You're talking to a person that was shot down himself in combat. Fortunately, I wasn't taken prisoner, but I was shot down in combat. I understand a little bit what that means. I understand what it means. And so we set out to meet with you to ask your advice.

When we took office, no policy-level negotiations with Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia had been held for several years. Despite the fears of some that negotiating with Vietnam implied recognition, despite the fears of others that the POW-MIA issue was a cold